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succeeded in adapting to their new social and geographic environment. We may presume that natural selection helped the population build up a genetic resistance to whatever montane illnesses had not previously affected the people when they were living in Mysore and that some lowland disease organisms were no longer able to survive at the new elevation, either because it was too high and cold for them or because the hosts among the scattered and tiny population died off without transferring these organisms to new hosts, or more probably because the population density was so low that, after one infection by any particular disease organism, antibodies were built up that protected all Badagas from any further infection in the near future. As the settlements expanded, the increasing numbers of people permitted greater transference of disease organisms and called for greater amounts of health care; but at the same time these settlements, located in most parts of the Nilgiri Plateau within a zone that lay between 1,200m and 2,200m feet elevation, gave people opportunities to select the more healthy residential sites, to explore micro-environmental differences in the area and most importantly to discover medicinal uses for dozens of new species of plants that were in many instances confined to the Plateau. We may presume that the pharmacological uses of local plants were discovered by Badaga women who worked as goatherds and closely observed the feeding habits of their animals. While it is true that Badagas do not keep goats today, they did so during the seventeenth century and later too.

After contact with the British a new equilibrium with their changed environment was achieved by the Badagas, and their population was able to increase rapidly for several decades while there was still a very low density of population. Why? One relevant factor, I would hypothesise, was that a change in their drinking habits followed the arrival of the British (from 1819 onward) and that this was associated with greater resistance to bacteria in the drinking water. The main drinks of the community at the time were fresh milk and stream water. Yet by the 1840s arrack, a locally made liquor, as well as tea and coffee, were common Badaga preferences. Other cultural practices confined infectious bacteria to relatively limited areas. Buffalo dung tended to collect in the stone kraals built just outside the villages. Similarly, indiscriminate spitting was not tolerated and spittoons were consequently in common use. A proverb stressed that, 'If you ask for an obligation it is essential to see the right people; it is essential

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to spit in the proper place.' With this attitude prevalent, the spread of various viruses and of *Mycobacterium tuberculosis* has been greatly curtailed. The regular washing of the body and shaving of pubic hair have also contributed to health by restricting the incidence of bodily fungi and lice-borne diseases.

The ecological significance of these various beliefs and practices is that as the Nilgiri population increased in the nineteenth century and some village streams began to be polluted by this new pressure, the Badagas managed to avoid some contamination by switching from drinking stream water and fresh milk to tea, coffee and sometimes alcohol, all of which would be relatively free of bacterial organisms. The new balance with the environment that this change brought about was certainly one factor in the remarkable increase in the Badaga population since the advent of the British (Appendix 2).

At the same time that this change in drinking habits was occurring their eating habits were undergoing an equally radical transformation. In part this was due to the several dozen types of fruit, grain and vegetable introduced from Europe by British settlers and adopted by most Badagas. The variety of their diet was thus greatly increased.

VILLAGE NAMES

A study of the present Badaga hamlet names yields a body of insights about the early settlements formed during the two and a half centuries preceding the first British report (Keys, 1812).

Perhaps a somewhat lyrical description of the Nilgiri Plateau may at this point aid the reader's understanding of what is to follow:

> The plateau is a true tableland, its average height being very uniform. But there is not a square mile of level ground in the whole of it, its surface being broken by endless undulations which in places swell into considerable and distinct ranges. It rises most abruptly from the plains below it; and on the west, above the Ouchterlony Valley and southwards, its sides are often sheer, bare walls, hundreds of feet in height and too steep even for trees to obtain a footing on them. Elsewhere dense forest covers almost the whole of its slopes . . .
>
> It is first of all divided east and west into two fairly equal but

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after a few hours. This seemingly trivial belief had a hygienic importance, for it meant that fresh milk would be used quickly and not kept, lest the tabu about boiling be violated. If milk were allowed to "boil up" (i.e., curdle) *of its own accord*, this was taken as an omen of imminent danger or death for the household, and thus a very serious matter indeed.

The effect upon Badaga health of the changes in drinking habits outlined above was reinforced by other cultural practices, specifically in regard to buffalo dung and spitting. Various maps of Badaga villages made in the first half of the nineteenth century show that several stone kraals were located just outside each village. This means that the fecal matter of buffalo herds was confined to a certain place; (I have myself seen dung over a foot deep in some kraals). Unsavoury though these places must have been, they ensured that the dung was not spread throughout the habitation area of each village, and this substantially reduced "the chance of transference of enzootic and epizootic diseases to man" (Alland 1970: 56). As the value of farmland for tea and potato cultivation grew, especially during the present century, the Badaga population increased dramatically but the size of the cattle herds dwindled. The present-day situation is therefore that Badaga population density is vastly higher than it was, but the risks of cattle-borne infection are proportionately much less because the lack of grazing has forced them to make heavy reductions in the size of their herds and abandon many of the kraals.

As we shall see below (2.11), indiscriminate spitting was not allowed in and near the home or temple. Spittoons were used inside the house; and a proverb stressed that, "If you ask for an obligation it is essential to see the right people: it is essential to spit in the proper place." With this attitude prevalent, the spread of various viruses and of *Mycobacterium tuberculosis* has been greatly curtailed. The regular washing of the body and shaving of pubic hair described below (2.9, 2.13) have also contributed to health by restricting the incidence of bodily fungi and lice-borne diseases (Alland 1970: 58). In nearly all villages the houses are built in parallel lines with solid stone or brick walls partitioning each house from its neighbours. In Ke:ti, a typical village in this respect, it was found that on the average each row of houses was separated from those in front and behind it by a distance of 10 meters, which was mostly the span of the courtyards. This relative lack of crowding of living space has

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751 Europeans was that the Badagas were dirty people (Keys 1812: xlix; Gover 1871: 86; Madras 1928: 63; Vivekanandam Pillai 1937: 247). Some explained this as due to the coldness of the mountain water, others to lack of soap! In fact this latter word had to be borrowed from English; the Badagas used a substitute before they began to buy soap. It was either a piece of bark from the pellitory plant or else was *siakoy*, a powder they made from certain dried fruits.

751 515 The Badagas did not in the past bathe daily, and this was a factor in their lack of resistance to parasites and disease. Since one's relatives often died, however, and festivals were quite frequent too, there were monthly opportunities to bathe before a ceremony or after a funeral. Early in the present century Badagas began to use soap and to bathe at least once a week (Ranga 1934: 68). Nowadays children are washed every evening, while adults bathe first thing each morning. Small children are also given a castor oil bath sometimes, but adults like a bath in sesame oil. This is rubbed all over the head and body, and is then left on while the person sits in the sun for an hour or two. It is easily washed off with soap and water afterwards. Sesame oil is thought to have a "cooling" effect on the body; but it is never swallowed.

751 124 Dissatisfaction with standards of hygiene and cleanliness was minimal in 1963, according to interviews I had then with 301 Badaga males and another 119 females. These adults were asked if they thought hygiene and cleanliness should be improved in their villages. Of the males 8.3 per cent said Yes, 91.7 per cent No; of the women, only 0.8 per cent—one person—said Yes!

751 514 515 2.10. Another complaint of nineteenth century Europeans concerned the use of the Ootacamund Lake and other Nilgiri streams "as a receptacle for sewage of the worst kind," and this was a real health hazard, since the same sources provided most of the drinking water (Price 1908: 35, 170). Conveniently for their own peace of mind, the Badagas have an appropriate saying: "Because the river flows it is not impure." The underlying idea is that if a man washes his rectum in a stream, a girl with menses bathes in it, or someone urinates in it, the water is not impure unless one can actually see blood or feces in the water at the point where one is standing. Even so, every village has a designated place where the women can wash their vulvae. When a person defecates in the countryside, he does not wipe the rectum but walks to the nearest stream and washes it

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there. (The Todas are the only group in this region who habitually wipe the rectum with green leaves.)

2.11. The nose is cleaned by holding it between the index finger and thumb of the left hand, and blowing the mucus onto the ground. With babies, a relative sucks the nose and then spits the mucus out.

No one should spit on the floor of the house or blow his nose there. Well-mannered people do not spit on the yard outside either, but might instead spit on the grass of the village green provided nobody else was nearby. Furthermore, people do not spit in a temple out of respect for the god; nor on a funeral ground. Two types of spittoons, nowadays of brass, are kept in the house: a *kuplike* for men and an *uggu kiṇḍi* for men and old women. The latter vessel must be kept in the outer room, and although men do use the vessel they will not touch it. The men's spittoon, *kuplike*, must not be used by women, but may be carried into the inner, more sacred room of the house.

Spitting is an act that normally accompanies the chewing of tobacco. It is charged with a good deal of social significance. Thus if a woman spits on the ground near an enemy, this means: "I don't like you — go away!" A man will spit at an enemy when abusing him, but if he otherwise spits in someone's direction it means he is going to fight with that person. If during a ceremony a boy is staring at a girl in the crowd, she either opens her mouth to show that she will accept his advances, or spits on the ground to show she does not. Until the nineteenth century one of the severest punishments for a woman was to make her drink water from an earthen spittoon in public.

2.12. Badagas clean the teeth by rubbing them with charcoal and then rinsing the mouth. Those who have settled in the Waina:ḍ (the Waina:ḍ Gaudas) make a black powder for cleaning the teeth, by frying up the husks of grain with salt. A proverb wisely admonishes that, "The teeth are spoiled by not picking with a stick."

2.13. In early days Badaga women rubbed butter into their hair and bodies (as Toda women still do); but they used no scents. In those times women had no hair brushes, and so they would take the prickly seed pod of the thorn-apple, dry it out, and use it instead. Now hairbrushes are universally used.

Women regularly remove their armpit and pubic hair nowadays, with the help of a special soap sold in the market which causes the

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course simply to please their parents; or so that the husband will not be suspected of impotence by his watchful relatives; or so that his parents may not accuse the girl of being barren; or, when one of them does want intercourse, the other does it merely to oblige. Public opinion is an important factor in sexual relations, and it must if possible be satisfied by a pregnancy. If a couple have no children a divorce may be forced upon them after a while, even if neither of them wants that. When a couple have no children outsiders start asking their parents, "What is the matter with them?" Interestingly, loose talk of this sort will be directed towards the childless husband before people — primarily his parents — begin to attach any blame to the girl.

Older couples who have several children continue to engage in coitus either for pleasure or out of habit, I was told. Men may continue into old age, perhaps performing the act no more than once a month; but women tend to lose interest once menopause has set in, and are often not in the best of health by that time. A small minority of widowers decide they have the strength to remarry and provided they are wealthy enough to support another wife may intimate this interest to a male friend of equal age. He will tell the old man's sons and daughters about the idea, and these children will then look around for a new stepmother. This however will only occur after they have tested the old man's capabilities. One test is to have someone observe him when he urinates: it must be noted whether the flow of urine was strong enough to make a slight hole in the mud, which would be taken as an indication of suitable strength. A further test might involve the wife of his younger brother. She would be deputed to catch him somewhere privately where she might suggest particular women for him, or even go so far as to assay his capabilities herself. Such an affair would be impermissible if the old man were related as a "husband's father" to her — albeit a classificatory one. But otherwise, provided the affair were handled with discretion, it would be quite acceptable for her to have relations with a husband's brother. Furthermore "it is quite common for a widow to marry her brother-in-law" ("Miles" 1933: 74). In the past a wealthy old widower might ask a younger man to find him a wife. If successful in this he would probably locate a young but barren woman, who might well complain right away that such an old man could not satisfy her. This dilemma was sometimes overcome when the go-between undertook to satisfy the woman provided she married his older friend.

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539 children are the same"—in that they cannot be properly controlled
855 and so should be exempted from the rules of the household. And again: "If the child shits on your thigh, will you cut it right off?" It is recognised that bringing up children is no easy task: "Pacifying the children is no less a job than digesting the raw flesh of an animal" (Verghese 1963: 423).

Infancy

854 5.8. The socialization of the infant may have to begin with the education of the mother. Three or four days after the delivery she starts bathing the baby herself, but if this is her first child she will usually be helped for a couple of weeks by her own mother until she has learnt the correct procedure. No swaddling or tying of the child occurs (Jagor 1876: 199), but it is bundled up in old rags to keep it warm. As a proverb explains, "The child will grow fast with old rags, and the buffalo will grow fast with dung." It is for this reason that a pregnant woman keeps all old cloth. (More usually rags are made into pillows or bedding, or used at menstruation; and woollen rags are kept for bandages.) The child should always be kept in warm cloths, for it is believed that if his temperature is high it can be reduced to normal, but if it is lower than normal he cannot raise it. In the old days when no woollens were available, babies were covered with cotton folded to eight or ten thicknesses for greater warmth. Only used cloth is allowed, which is why the old rags are preserved; but if someone wants to give a baby a new cloth one of the parents should first wear it a little and rub it on the body so that it can be considered used.

[825] 5.9. Care is taken to keep a baby's face clean, especially during the first 40 or 50 days, when a cat might otherwise find milk on its face and either suffocate the baby or do it some harm.

[539] It is accepted as natural that the nose often gets dirty: as a proverb puts it, "So long as the nose exists, won't there be mucus
[514] oozing from it?" As was mentioned earlier (2.11), the method of cleaning a baby's nose is to suck it and spit the mucus out. (If a woman has been chewing tobacco she washes her mouth out before doing this.) This method is considered more gentle than squeezing the nose; but after a child has reached six months relatives clean it with the index finger and thumb of either hand, or with a body cloth. Between the ages of three and five, depending on when the

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842 offer up the hair of all subsequent children that
782 may have been born to him in the interim.
6.64. Early in the nineteenth century the Abbé
847 J. A. Dubois, understandably aghast at what he
782 had learnt, noted that women yearning for children
786 prostituted themselves to anyone at temple festi-
837 vals in the plains near the foot of the Nilgiri Hills. "Barren women, in the hope that they will cease to be so, visit them after binding themselves by a vow to grant their favours to a fixed number of libertines" (Dubois 1906 : 596). He also wrote
842 about the temple at Nanjangud, near Mysore,
788 which is in the centre of the Badagas' ancient home-
787 land and is still much visited by them:

•514

> Offerings and prayers are not the only ceremonies which have to be gone through. On leaving the temple the woman, accompanied by her husband, has to go to a place where all the pilgrims are accustomed to resort to answer the calls of nature. There the husband and the wife collect with their hands a certain quantity of ordure and form it into a small pyramid, which they are careful to mark with a sign that will enable them to recognize it. Then they go to the neighbouring tank and mix in the hollow of their hands the filth which has soiled their fingers. (But I will spare my readers the rest.) After having performed their ablutions they retire. Two or three days afterwards they visit their pyramid, and, still using their hands, turn the filthy mass over and over and examine it as carefully and as seriously as the Roman augurs scrutinized the entrails of sacrificed animals, in order to see if any insects have been engendered in it. In this case it would be a very good omen, showing that the woman would soon be pregnant. But if, after careful search, not even the smallest insect is visible, the poor couple,

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sad and discouraged, return home in the full conviction that the expenses they have been put to and the pains they have taken have been of no avail. (Dubois 1906 : 594-95)

More recently it has also been reported that sterile women attended the popular festival of the goddess Ma:riamma at Ka:ramaḍai, near the eastern foot of the Nilgiris in Coimbatore District, to have intercourse with religious mendicants there in the hope of getting children. Such unpleasant procedures, resorted to by Badaga, Tamilian and Kanarese pilgrims alike, have long since ceased to occur, but childless couples still make vows at the Ka:ramaḍai festival "Miles" : (1933 267).

6.65. A liquid medicine (details unrecorded) otherwise given to newly delivered mothers (cf. 4.11) is administered to a person who cannot urinate. This condition and the associated swollen bladder, caused by excess of "heat" in the body, are relieved by the medicine.

URETHRITIS (*sege*)

Fevers

6.66. The Badagas like the English have a saying, "If you are suffering from a cold, take extra food; if suffering from a fever, take little food." There are different kinds of fever, and they can affect people of all ages, but one medicine can be taken for all kinds. The shoots and smaller leaves of the velvety patchouli and related species (*koḍaṅgu*) are ground up and the juice from them mixed with some salt. This is swallowed, and is said to be more effective than quinine. In the early nineteeth century opium was used as a prophylactic against fever (Price 1908: 224).

FEVER (*jara*)

6.67. The Kurumbas knew of a now-forgotten twig or root which, when smelled fresh, dispelled fever. The present medicine of the Badagas makes use instead of the nest of the red-headed fantail warbler

463 all pubic hair (though Badaga women do it for themselves) because it is thought
554 unesthetic and is found to harbor lice and ticks. The disgrace attached to this
[515] occupation is well displayed in one of the great expressions of Badaga disdain:
"What can you do? -- You can't even shave my cock!" Badagas who are forced to
take up barbering because of poverty never make a full-time occupation of it,
especially as professional barbers are now generally available from other commu-
•514 nities. So far as scavenging is concerned, there is no need at all to remove night
(783) soil from the houses, because Badagas always defecate either in the fields and
bushes, or in a special manure pit. The feces of small children are not considered
462 polluting and are easily removed from the house by anyone. All other cleaning and
sweeping around the house is done by the womenfolk living there.

Those Badagas who are neither gentry nor in the poverty-stricken category
178 show some signs of having achieved upward mobility over the past century or so.
565 There was traditionally a class of gentry, as we know, that was distinguished by
higher prestige and higher behavioral expectations. On the other hand there was in
all likelihood no class of poverty-stricken Badagas obliged to become barbers or
launderers until land pressure and the settlement of boundaries in the 1880's had
made it difficult for the disinherited and landless to find new farming land. Only
in the 80 or 90 years since that period has this landless class emerged at the bot-
tom of the status hierarchy. And as it emerged, the prestige of the gentry was
continuously on the wane. Both changes were related, as we shall see, to increas-
(556) ing Badaga involvement in the Indian cash economy. The middle class of peasant
families seems slowly to have decreased the gap in conduct and prestige that
separated them from the gentry families; until now the cash income of a family is
the clearest mark of its influence in the community. The aristocratic values of

776 dismount. He should not urinate in a stream, either; nor should he stand up while
779 urinating on the earth, for this shows disrespect to the earth goddess. He should
782 always squat down to urinate or defecate, and for fear of disrespect the buttocks
(514) should not be directed toward the sun at this time. But apart from such minor regulations for personal conduct the gods of nature receive little attention, except when the water-goddess has not brought rain in time. Then the villagers will say prayers and make offerings at one of their temples in an attempt to get the favor of a rainfall.

The fourth category of supernatural beings is the ghost. This is the wan-
775 dering spirit of a person who chanced to die before he was destined to, and it
779 frequently gets inside a living person to find warmth and food. The malicious
(789) ghosts can cause a lot of trouble, but there is no use in worshipping them. When a ghost becomes bothersome it is exorcised by a man noted for this art, who gives it whatever material requirements it may (through the mouth of the possessed person) demand. Ghosts cannot usually act as intermediaries between men and gods; but there is a special category who become angels. These are dead people who have done good during their lives, but who for some reason want to return to this
(828) world rather than be merged with god. While they are waiting to be reborn to a
(787) higher social status they act as the messengers of god, and come to people in their dreams to warn them of impending disasters.

The fifth category of supernatural beings is the demon, who is periodically
776 propitiated with a blood sacrifice or some liquor. This is a being who is incapable
779 of doing good, but may do harm if he chooses. He is thought capable of killing
782 people that he meets at night, and of obstructing various projects. There are no temples to the demon, but there are recognized places in the fields where offerings are left for him, just as there are recognized places for leaving things that

244 ridges constructed in the same plots are planted with broad beans (Vicia faba L.) or peas. Kitchen gardens are typically better manured and cared for. Because they are nearer to community cattle-pens and livestock huts, more manure is likely to be placed on them. Due to (514) the absence of toilets in houses, community dwellers naturally defecate [364] more frequently on nearby plots. And lastly, women recurrently spread kitchen ashes or trash over kitchen gardens. When family members have 241 time to spare, they may easily care for kitchen garden plots near the 592 communities in which they live. Women work on them between their 462 household duties, and men who are regularly employed work on them during off duty hours.

175 Shifting agriculture. In 1800 the Badagas were practicing shift-
241 ing slash-burn (kottukadu) agriculture (Buchanan 1870, 1: 462). As
361 later writers described Badaga hamlets and villages in terms of perma-
nence, it is conjectured that Badagas then dwelt in permanent communi-
ties and cultivated different plots on the nearby countryside from year
241 to year. From the time Englishmen started to administer the Nilgiris
651 until the late 1800s, the bhurty revenue system existed over the upper
Nilgiris. Under this system a farmer could hold up to ten times the
taxed land he actually cultivated in any single year. Therefore, a man
who paid taxes on five acres could hold nine other five-acre plots
scattered over the upper Nilgiris. Plot alternation accompanied by the
necessary clearance of vegetation off fallowed land not cultivated for
years, or off newly claimed forest land, formed a system of shifting
agriculture. Another system was followed in the western Kundahs, which